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ACTUAL SITUATION OF AGRICULTURE IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: THE CASE OF ZAIRE

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ABSTRACT Agriculture remains the principal component of economic development in most African countries. Consequently, it is absurd to think of development without an adequate agricultural policy as it is the case today.

An adequate strategy of agricultural development in Zaire necessitates the analysis of the causes of current agrarian crisis and, in particular, the understanding of how the additional agricultural output generated by the peasant community is monopolized by the commercial bourgeoisie. Expansion of the agricultural production (not only cash crops but also food production) should bring economical gains both to the state, the commercial bourgeoisie and to the peasants. Nevertheless, the state and the commercial bourgeoisie do not dare to see this fact.

Furthermore, agriculture in Sub-Saharan Africa presents many common features and faces similar difficulties. The analysis of the Zairian agriculture constitutes, then, a case study.

Key Words: Peasants' agriculture; Agricultural crisis; National bourgeoisie; Sub-Saharan Africa; Zaire.

INTRODUCTION

Most African countries have been confronted these past years with a serious economic crisis characterized by heavy external debt which represented 50.63% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 1982 (Christensen & Wituchi, 1986). low productivity, especially in agriculture, and increasing poverty among both rural and urban populations.

In the meantime, the minority ruling class (political and commercial bourgeoisie) in power has almost confiscated the state apparatus to realize its personal interests and wealth accumulation.

Thus, most observers interested in Africa's evolution remain very sceptical about the economic development of this continent. Development is a difficult concept, especially relating to the situation of Third World countries and many contradictory definitions have been given about it.

Some Western scientists have considered development as a stage of human society characterized by high industrialization, sustained economic growth, abundance of goods and services (Rostow, 1963; Samuelson, 1972). This conception has raised severe criticisms. Schumacher (1974: 171) has noticed that "economic development is something much wider and deeper than economics, let alone econometrics. Its roots lie outside the economic sphere, in education, organization, discipline and,

beyond that, in political independence and a national consciousness of self-reliance".

Marxist scientists have centred their analysis on the theory of dependence and exploitation of the periphery for the benefit of the international capitalism, so-called centre (Samir, 1973; Frank, 1971). Dimensions of dependence and domination which characterise political and economic relations between advanced and developing countries cannot be excluded from the explanation of the underdevelopment process.

However, it will be a paralysing analysis if we cannot find out practical solutions to overcome underdevelopment structures. Then, I think that it is not sufficient to limit our investigations to the level of simple ascertainment of dependence or exploitation.

Consequently, economic development is considered, in this paper, as human beings' capability to participate actively in the national economy and to share equitably the national product. Agricultural development means, then, the possibility for peasants to increase steadily the agricultural output and, consequently, to elevate their income and their standard of living through the accessibility to simple and appropriate technology. In the same way, agricultural development should not be confused with high mechanization which profits, in many cases, only the rich and minority farmers.

Hypotheses which sustain this study can be summarized as follows:

1. The Zairian agricultural crisis could be easily observed from recent production statistics and is the result of wrong economic policy which neglects agriculture and, then, strengthens underdevelopment and poverty.
2. An adequate strategy of agricultural development is possible provided that agricultural structures and causes of the crisis are carefully analyzed. Especially relevant to this is the role of the State and the commercial bourgeoisie's coalition which exploits peasants through very low agricultural prices and, then, prevents them from improving their productivity beyond self-sufficiency.

This study intends to analyze the current situation of Zairian agriculture: its structures and perspectives. It emphasizes a correct explanation of causes of the agricultural crisis in Zaire from peasants' opinions, interests and motivations.

Accordingly, this study suits with the "Agrarian populism theory" as defined by Richards (1985). Agrarian populism theory had been initiated in the late 19th century among some Russian socialists and "family farmers" in the United States.

In contradistinction to the views of many orthodox Marxists, particularly Lenin in his analysis of "the differentiation of the peasantry" (Lenin, 1982), the Russian populists refuted "evolutionist" interpretations of agrarian change, arguing instead that it would be possible to pass from feudalism to socialism without capitalist agriculture as an intervening stage.

Translated in action, the populist approach sought to transform Russian agriculture through appeal to peasant economic interests and cultural values, and through the improvement of existing peasant institutions and systems of production. The most popular representative of this theory in Russia was the agricultural economist, A. V. Chayanov.

American populism was a political movement organized by small-scale farmers against urban-based financial speculators. Under a populist rubric, extension workers

were truly "agents" rather than the "educators", "communicators" even "salesmen" they have since become.

In Africa, the term populism has been used to describe peasant resistance movements directed against colonial penetration and also in a programmatic sense as a rallying call for pro-rural, pro-peasant development strategies.

Richards (1985) refers to this approach as a "People's Science" which enable to undertake a successful agricultural revolution in Africa. Populist arguments which sustain his research can be summarized in three points:

1. Whereas much of Africa's rural population is scattered and poor, it is also inventively self-reliant. Inventive self-reliance is one of Africa's most precious resources and development initiatives should aim to maximize the utilization of this human resource.
2. The most effective and rapid rates of agricultural change will occur when state resources are used to back up changes that small-scale farmers are already keen to make.
3. Most rural development programmes have failed because of lack of popular participation in project design and the development of new technologies. This results either in inappropriate innovations or in support of the least appropriate groups in farming community. Typically, project inputs fail to work as intended or they end up in the hands of non farmers (merchants, transporters, civil servants, politicians).

Agrarian populism theory can be approached as the guiding principle which affirms that "sympathy with the victims of historical process and scepticism about the victor's claim provide essential safeguards against being taken in by the dominant mythology" (Barrington, 1966: 523).

In the same way, Nzongola (1986: 10) has noted also that "it is a question of whether one analyzes society from the standpoint of the dominant groups, who have a vested interest in mystifying the way society works, or from the standpoint of ordinary people, who have nothing to lose from truthful analysis of their predicament".

In order to confront the contradictory interests between different social groups in the Zairian economy, I use the Marxist dialectics, especially the class struggle concept, which considers each social reality as a totality including contradictions and conflicts. The dialectical method intends to disclose these contradictions and to understand them in an incessant movement of thesis, antithesis and synthesis.

Besides, agriculture in Sub-Saharan Africa presents many common features (e.g. dualist structures, important economic contribution) and faces almost the same problems of low productivity, lack of infrastructure and improved technology, illiteracy, etc. Indeed, in spite of important mining resources (copper, cobalt, diamond, tin, etc.), Zaire is, first of all, an agricultural country and can justly be considered as a case study in an African context.

The actual situation of Zairian agriculture is very similar to other mineral exporting countries such as Nigeria, Zambia and Gabon. In these countries, the agricultural sector has been generally weakened for the benefit of mining production. Thus, economic crisis in these countries is mainly an agricultural crisis. For instance, Zaire

is now running into debt (about 7 billion dollars) mainly for massive food imports which represent more than 40% of national food requirement (against only 1% before 1960).

Further, the agricultural sector which contributed to almost 50% of the GDP before the independence accounts nowadays for less than 15%. This decrease can be also observed about export earnings and other economic indicators as shown further in this study. The agricultural crisis explains the steady dependence of Zairian economy upon one export product, copper. It explains also the paradoxical situation of the country potentially very rich but whose population (about 60% in rural areas) is among the poorest in Africa with a per capita income evaluated at 200 dollars per year.

Thus, the Zairian analysis is viewed here as a case study in an African context without minimizing the fact that Sub-Saharan Africa is a region of great diversity in terms of size, populations, natural resources, geographic situation and political systems.

Below I will: (1) present some aspects of the agricultural crisis in Sub-Saharan Africa; (2) analyze dualistic structure of Zairian agriculture and its impact on the national economy; (3) discuss formal explanations admitted by public institutions to justify the current situation of the agricultural sector and thence, specify the responsibility of the coalition between the "commercial bourgeoisie" and the Zairian state in the process of peasants' exploitation; and (4) conclude the paper by a short appreciation on perspectives to solve the current agricultural crisis.

THE PROBLEM OF SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA'S AGRICULTURE

Agriculture remains the principal component of economic development in most African countries. The following arguments can be advanced to support this assertion:

1. Except some mining and oil exporting countries, most African countries receive their foreign currency mainly from agricultural exports. For instance, Chad and Sudan receive 97% of their export-earnings from agriculture.
2. The agricultural sector contributes to more than 40% of the GDP in many African countries (e.g. Burundi: 65%; Ethiopia: 56%; Gambia: 58%).
3. The percentage of economically active population engaged in agriculture still remains very high (e.g. Burkina Faso: 87%; Tanzania: 86%; Senegal: 80%; Rwanda: 93%).
4. The industrial sector is still an embryo in Africa and needs a dynamic agriculture for capital accumulation (raw materials and financial means).

Consequently, it is absurd to think of development in Africa without adequate agricultural policy as it is the case currently in many countries. Today, more than 20 countries in Africa have to deal with starvation problems while malnutrition, especially for small children, is almost a generalized phenomenon.

The United-Nations statistics show that Sub-Saharan Africa is the only region of the world where per capita food production has declined over the past 20 years. Indeed, between 1970 and 1978, Sub-Saharan African annual per capita food production fell to -1.3% (Gakou, 1987).

Table 1. Indices of per capita food production (1969–1971 = 100) and population growth rate in 1982.

		Indices of food production	Population growth rate (%)
A group	Guinea	101	2.3
	Ivory Coast	123	3.6
	Kenya	102	4.1
	Liberia	106	3.2
	Malawi	102	6.3
	Rwanda	103	4.1
	Average	106	3.9
B Group	Benin	97	2.8
	Burundi	96	2.4
	Cameroon	97	1.9
	Madagascar	81	2.6
	Nigeria	84	3.4
	Sierra Leone	90	1.8
	Sudan	96	2.2
	Tanzania	88	2.3
	Burkina Faso	90	1.8
	Zaire	92	2.8*
	Zambia	83	2.3
	Zimbabwe	82	2.7
	Average	90	2.4
C Group	Angola	70	2.6
	Ethiopia	68	2.7
	Ghana	65	3.2
	Mali	69	2.5
	Mozambique	72	3.2
	Niger	72	2.8
	Senegal	76	3.5
	Togo	79	2.1
	Uganda	79	3.5
	Average	72	2.9

Source: Sakamoto, 1987: 45; *Cf. DADR, 1986: 11.

Table I provides interesting data about the situation of per capita food production in Sub-Saharan African countries.

Countries belonging to A group have an average index of per capita food production (106) higher than the index of basic year (1969–1971 = 100). But they have also recorded a high annual demographic growth rate (3.9%).

Among countries of B group, the demographic growth rate is 2.4% per year, while the average index of per capita food production (90) has decreased compared to the basic period. Zaire belongs to this group with an index per capita of 92 and demographic rate of 2.8% per year. However, in Zaire's case, foodstuffs, except cassava, have not recorded any progression, but, on the contrary, a diminution of total production in absolute terms.

The situation is the worst in countries of C group with a demographic growth rate of 2.9% per year and a food production index below 90 compared to the basic period (1969–1971 = 100).

This food crisis which hits most African countries is generally justified by natural calamities such as rain fall shortage. Nevertheless, the wrong economic policies

followed by these countries which have stressed their investment effort on the mining sector rather than on agriculture, or have concentrated agricultural investment on cash crop production rather than on food production and have almost excluded peasants from the development process for the benefit of plantations, large-scale farms, etc. have important negative impact on agricultural development in Sub-Saharan Africa.

In spite of repeated political declarations and so-called Rural Development Programmes, African peasants, who constitute the majority of global population, remain economically very poor. For instance, in Zaire's case the rural per capita revenue is about 10 times lower than urban per capita income (Saint-Moulin, 1973).

Poverty in African rural areas is largely a result of low land productivity, while the agricultural sector still remains the main activity and source of income for the rural economy. It is curious to notice that most African countries, with an agricultural population representing more than 70% of global population are unable to cover national food requirements.

On the other hand, in developed countries, less than 10% (3.1% in United States) of the economically active population produces enough to feed all of their populations, to export and, beyond, to aid Africa and other developing countries.

This situation contrasts sharply with the fact that Africa has 25% of the world's potential arable land, while its population represents only 10% of the world population. This obvious gap between the agricultural situation in Africa and that of industrialized countries can be explained, partially, by the technical and scientific gap concerning means of production utilized in these different countries. Table 2 illustrates this gap and the weakness of Africa's agricultural productivity.

Low productivity of African agriculture is largely due to the generalized use of archaic tools (hoe, machete, spade, etc.) which prevent peasants from realizing important investments. But we must also carefully analyze why peasants, for a long time and in spite of deep social, political, and economic changes, still continue to use these tools and, then, are unable to have access to improved techniques.

Further, rural exodus, especially among young generations who refuse to engage themselves in hard, misremunerated agricultural work, is also a cause of the current crisis. Thus, the rural population engaged in agriculture decreases while the urban population is increasing. In many cases the urban population includes an important proportion of unemployed, then passive, persons to feed. The case of Zaire is revealing on this topic. Table 3 shows the evolution of the rural, urban and total population in Zaire from 1930 to 1984.

Table 2. Agricultural labour force and output per worker in some regions of the world.

Regions	Agricultural labour force as percentage of total labour force (%)	Agricultural output per agricultural worker (units)
Africa	72.4	0.2
North America	3.1	25.7
Eastern Europe and U.S.S.R.	23.9	2.0
Western Europe	12.7	3.6

Source: La-Anyane, 1985: 37.

Table 3. Evolution of Zaire's population (total, urban and rural).

Year	Total population (A)	Rural population (B)	B/A (%)	Urban population (C)	C/A (%)
1930	8,803,513	8,433,766	95.8	369,747	4.2
1935	9,775,191	9,203,024	94.2	572,167	5.8
1940	10,353,909	9,336,010	90.2	1,017,899	9.8
1945	10,507,149	8,941,748	85.1	1,565,401	14.9
1950	11,331,793	9,169,396	80.9	2,162,397	19.1
1955	12,562,631	9,712,547	77.3	2,850,084	22.7
1960	14,217,732	10,805,412	76.0	3,412,320	24.0
1965	16,562,503	15,018,192	89.0	1,825,187	11.0
1970	19,286,207	16,422,700	85.2	2,863,507	14.9
1975	22,582,230	16,105,091	71.3	6,477,139	28.7
1980	26,377,260	17,366,917	63.8	9,010,343	34.2
1984	29,671,407	16,722,805	56.4	12,948,602	43.6

Source: DADR, 1987: 59.

It is also meaningful to notice that peasants accept hard sacrifices to provide relatively good education for their children, not to become progressive or prosperous farmers, but, on the contrary, to avoid for them the low social condition of their community.

Peasants' agriculture in Sub-Saharan Africa, extensive and based on a fallow system, faces, now in some places, the demographic pressure which reduces sensitively the fallow delay and, then, induces ecological troubles due to the deforestation and cultivation of poor, marginal lands. The severe soil erosion experienced in South Kivu can illustrate environmental troubles caused by extensive cultivation in an overpopulated region.

Under these conditions, a real effort should be made to understand the nature of peasants' agriculture, the reasons for the current crisis and what should be done to improve its productivity in order to achieve integral development goals.

ANALYSIS OF DUALIST STRUCTURES OF ZAIRIAN AGRICULTURE

1. Composition of the Agricultural Sector in Zaire

Zaire has abundant arable land and only 5% of this arable land is estimated to be under cultivation (Table 4).

Abundance of arable land is an important opportunity for agricultural develop-

Table 4. Land use in Zaire (1984).

Land area	226,760 (1000 ha)
Arable & permanent crops	6,510
Arable land	5,950
Permanent crops	560
Permanent pasture	9,221
Forest & wood land	176,290
Other land	34,739
Rivers, lakes, etc.	7,781
Total	234,541

Source: FAO, 1985: 49.

Table 5. Composition of agricultural production in Zaire (in millions of Zaires at prices of 1970).

Products	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
A. Agriculture for exportation	26.1	21.1	22.1	21.3	21.1	20.8	21.8
Oil palm products	2.7	1.9	2.8	2.9	2.0	1.7	2.0
Coffee	11.8	9.1	10.7	9.8	9.9	9.1	11.2
Caoutchouc	3.4	2.2	2.5	2.4	1.9	1.7	1.9
Wood	1.9	1.8	2.1	2.0	2.2	2.2	3.0
Tea	0.4	0.3	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.3
Cocoa	0.7	0.6	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8
Others	5.2	5.3	3.2	3.2	4.0	5.1	2.6
B. Agriculture for national industry	13.0	19.2	17.4	19.2	18.8	18.7	19.2
Oil palm products	3.0	3.7	3.3	3.6	3.5	3.2	3.3
Wood	1.8	5.7	3.2	3.8	3.7	4.5	4.3
Cotton	2.2	2.7	3.7	3.0	3.1	3.3	3.8
Others	6.0	7.1	7.2	8.8	8.5	7.7	7.8
C. Commercial food production	40.1	41.3	44.6	45.8	47.1	48.1	49.1
Food-stuffs*	26.8	28.0	30.8	31.9	32.8	33.8	34.8
Breeding	6.8	6.8	7.0	7.1	7.3	7.3	7.3
Fishing	6.5	6.5	6.8	6.8	7.0	7.0	7.0
Total	79.2	81.7	84.1	86.3	87.0	87.6	90.1

*Maize, cassava, rice, plantains, fruits, vegetables

Source: Banque du Zaïre, 1985: 74.

ment, while the diversity of Zaire's climate and relief (high lands, savanna, forests) allows for the production of a whole gamut of food and cash crops. Zairian agricultural production can be subdivided into three groups: Foodstuffs, cash crops for export and raw materials for national industry.

Zaire exports about 11 items. According to Table 5, the coffee has been the main agricultural export because it provides about 50 % of the total export earnings generated by the agricultural sector: 48 % in 1980 and 51 % in 1984. We can also notice the disappearance of cotton as a Zairian export product and the importation of this item to cover requirements of the national textile industry. The agricultural sector also provides national industry with raw material, mainly oil palm products, tobacco, cotton, fibres (Urena-Punga) and sugar-cane. Cotton and fibres are produced exclusively by peasants, while other products come from large-scale plantations.

Food production originates from peasants' production and is constituted mainly of cassava, rice, maize and plantains which are largely consumed by the Zairian population. It includes also breeding and fishing production.

Table 6 shows that subsistence agriculture is very important in Zaire. Its value is higher than commercial agriculture. Table 6 shows also the dualistic character of

Table 6. Contribution of commercial agriculture and subsistence agriculture to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (in millions of Zaires at prices of 1970).

	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
1. Commercial agriculture	79.2	81.7	84.1	86.3	87.0	87.6	90.1
2. Subsistence agriculture	97.0	99.9	102.6	105.4	108.6	111.9	115.3
3. GDP	952.6	955.1	977.7	1006.0	975.5	988.3	1015.0

Source: Banque du Zaïre, 1985: 82.

Zairian agriculture: Traditional agriculture devoted to self-sufficient production and modern agriculture which produces for the national market and exportation. This dualistic structure results from the coexistence, on the Zairian territory, of two economic systems: The subsistence economy and the modern or commercial sector. These two sectors are, in most cases, in juxtaposition without integration and exert or suffer perverse effects because of this coexistence. In the following section I intend to analyse in more detail these two sectors relating to Zairian agriculture.

2. The Peasants' Agriculture

Peasants occupy the majority of the total population: 74.3% in 1970; 59.3% in 1984 (DADR, 1987). This sector can release only an insufficient commercial surplus which does not cover national food requirements. In 1984, the commercialized food represented only 23% of total production achieved by the peasant community. The self-sufficiency accounted for 77% during the same year (Banque du Zaïre, 1985). However, in the hinterland of big cities and regions which benefit from a well maintained transportation infrastructure, peasants can sell more than 50% of their total output.

Peasants' surplus is commercialized through middlemen in very disadvantageous conditions. According to one survey, from 1966 to 1970, the part of retail prices on the Kinshasa market which was given to the food producer decreased from 36% to 15% (BIRD, 1972). The situation has worsened since then, as shown afterwards in this study.

Technically, traditional agriculture, also called itinerant agriculture, is characterized by a fallow system which allows soil regeneration. The fallow delay depends on possibilities of arable land (6–10 years in savanna and 10–15 years in forest area). Generally very simple tools are still utilized and poor stocking conditions cause important damage.

The average size of a family farm is small: 0.6 ha per peasant in forest areas and 1–2 ha in savanna areas. Generally agricultural inputs such as fertilizers or insecticides are limitedly used by peasants, except the case of small-scale agriculture around dwelling places where the domestic waste is used as manure.

Concerning social and economic organization, family labour constitutes the main factor of agricultural production. Especially, female labour represents about 90% of the total labour force engaged in food production. In many cases, the man stops working just after land preparation.

Land legislation stipulates that the soil is the exclusive, inalienable and imprescriptible property of the state. However, the land still remains a collective property on a clan level. The leader distributes arable land to every peasant, while the production is carried out on an individual property basis. Generally, there are not important land problems in Zaire, except in the eastern overpopulated region of Kivu where the traditional chief called "Mwami" is still powerful enough in land distribution and claim tenure from peasants.

Food production constitutes the dominant activity in rural areas. However, in some

societies, other activities such as handicraft, fishing, hunting and breeding can surpass food production. This is the case of the Lokele fishers in the Region of "Haut-Zaïre" and cattle breeding in Bashi society (South Kivu).

Rural areas, where the traditional agriculture is practised are characterized by the absence of basic social infrastructures such as health centres and schools except some private initiatives mainly from Catholic and Protestant missionaries (for instance modern medical centres of Tshikaji and Nyakunde). Elementary and secondary schools, besides general crisis which characterizes the educational system in Zaïre, are insufficient while their teachers have been demobilized because of considerable delay and irregularity in the payment of their salaries.

During the colonial era, Belgium had tried to improve traditional agriculture by introducing the "Paysannat" system. This was done in order to replace the itinerant agriculture which causes soil destruction by intensive agriculture which assures perennality of soil productivity (Stanner, 1955: 469).

After 1960, this system which was still in its experimental stage, collapsed and attempts to revive it have almost failed. Then, traditional agriculture has not changed its structure since the colonial era. Techniques used remain very simple, and the productivity remains very low in spite of a steady growth of the urban population: 24% in 1960 and 34.16% in 1980. Besides, peasants have no access to financial means in order to purchase agricultural inputs and to improve their land productivity.

3. The Commercial Agriculture

Commercial agriculture, introduced under Belgian rule, is constituted by large-scale plantations and agri-business. This sector is specialized in cash crops, mainly coffee, caoutchouc, oil palm products, wood and tea. Under Belgian rule, this agriculture was practised quasi exclusively by Europeans, owners of individual large-scale farms and capitalist firms. Before 1960, the European producers shared 95% of oil palm products, 87% of coffee production (robusta), 97% of tea, 99% of cocoa and 90% of rubber production (Ndongala, 1966).

This type of agriculture, so-called modern sector, utilized high techniques in the production and commercialization processes. It had easy access to private and public credit institutions and was the sole beneficiary of agricultural research results which were conceived exclusively according to its requirements.

The average size of individual farms was about 100 ha, while trans-national firms had exploited more than 7,000 ha. Some of them, such as the HCB (Huilerie du Congo Belge), currently PLZ (Plantations Lever au Zaïre), were granted more than 350,000 ha. Today, large-scale plantations and firms belong, in many cases, to foreign investors generally associated with Zairian commercial and political bourgeoisie. The production of this sector is merely orientated to exporting or to provide national industry with raw material.

National private investments are particularly important to coffee plantations because of relatively good prices in the international market and possibilities of fraudulent trade with neighbouring countries (Uganda, Sudan, Burundi, etc.). Tea, cocoa, and oil palm are also produced by modern plantations. However, along with these

large-scale firms, exist also many small plantations (essentially coffee plantations) mostly mismanaged.

Since 1970, and despite the promulgation of a very liberal investment legislation, commercial agriculture is facing investment problems due to foreign investors' suspicions since the nationalization (Zairianization and Radicalization) measures taken by the Zairian government in 1973–1974.

Lack of long-term investments in this sector due to the preference of the national bourgeoisie to invest in speculative activities instead of long-term productive projects and also to the limited opportunities of public investments in agriculture, explains once more why the contribution of plantations to export-earning and the GDP has been decreasing for a long time.

4. Transformation of Dualistic Structure

Generally, Zairian agriculture still keeps the same fundamental structures inherited from the colonization: Along with a commercial agriculture which uses modern techniques and has strong economic links with developed capitalist countries for whom it works, there still exists a traditional sector devoted to self-sufficient production and characterized by low land productivity.

However, agricultural development requires the transformation of these dualistic structures. This transformation consists in the modernization of traditional agriculture and in the introversion of commercial sector. Thus, the modern sector will also produce foodstuffs without excluding peasants from the national economy. This structural transformation suggests an appropriate industrialization process which should be privileged in Zaire's case: An integrated national industry supplying agriculture with modern inputs and utilizing local agricultural products as raw material.

Agriculture can sustain integrated development provided that its products are manufactured by national firms and its inputs (e.g. equipment, fertilizers) supplied by national industry. It is hence possible to dispose of an integrated industrial circuit instead of having a juxtaposition of heterogeneous units, as it is the case today. Nowadays, modern plantations and peasants' agriculture are both facing a serious crisis: The contribution of the agricultural sector to the GDP, export-earnings and labour force has drastically decreased. From the stagnation which has characterized this sector just after 1960, we are experiencing now a steady regression since 1970. What is the meaning of this regression?

CONTRIBUTION OF THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR TO THE NATIONAL ECONOMY

I refer to three economic indicators to appreciate the importance of agriculture in Zairian economy: Its contribution to the GDP composition, to export-earnings and to the labour force.

1. Contribution of Agriculture to the GDP composition

Table 7 shows that the agricultural contribution to the GDP has decreased from

Table 7. Partition of commercial GDP*.

	1958	1966	1969	1972	1978	1980	1984
1. Commercial agriculture	22.5	8.3	9.6	9.5	15.3	13.2	16.9
2. Mining production and metallurgy	19.3	18.9	28.6	17.5	14.4	27.1	31.0
3. Manufacturing industry	8.5	12.6	8.7	10.6	7.6	3.8	2.5
4. Construction	4.3	2.2	2.6	3.8	2.8	3.3	4.2
5. Electricity, water	2.0	0.9	1.1	1.0	0.3	0.1	0.1
6. Transport	9.1	9.7	9.8	10.1	2.1	2.4	1.3
7. Commerce and services	34.3	47.4	39.6	47.5	56.1	46.4	42.3
8. Others	—	—	—	—	1.6	3.9	1.9
Commercial GDP	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

*Commercial GDP consists only of activities belonging to cash economy. Thus, the subsistence agriculture, other self-sufficient activities (e.g. housing) and sources of energy are not concerned.

Source: Peemans, 1981: 216; Banque du Zaïre, 1985: 71.

year to year, especially after 1960. We notice that the contribution of the agricultural sector has passed from 22.5% in 1958, 9.5% in 1972 and to 16.9% in 1984. This contribution is still lower than its level before 1960. On the contrary, commerce and services have considerably increased in importance: 34.3% in 1958, 47.5% in 1972, 56.1% in 1978 and 42.3% in 1984. The manufacturing industry has not improved its contribution: 12.6% in 1966 and only 2.5% in 1984.

Thus, agricultural recession has resulted in the high rise of the tertiary sector, while the manufacturing industry has consistently diminished its significance from year to year. Shall we conclude that this structural change in the GDP composition is a sign of economic dynamism and therefore constitutes a development indicator?

Indeed, according to research findings of economists such as Rosier (1968) and Malassis (1973), the historic process of economic development in industrialized countries has always been accompanied by the decline of agriculture's contribution to the GDP. Agriculture which had contributed to more than 20% of the GDP at the beginning of this century (32% in France in 1910: 22% in U.S.A. in 1900 and 54.2% in Japan in 1920) has since then accounted for less than 8% (3% in U.S.A.: 5.9% in Sweden and 4% in U.K.) in 1967 (Table 8). This decline is one of the consequences of the industrialization process which brought on the expansion of the service sector.

Besides, in developed countries, the regression of the contribution of the agricultural sector to the GDP composition does not concern quantities produced. In these countries, the volume of agricultural production increases due to the improvement of technical productivity, while its contribution to the GDP decreases due to the diversification of economic activities henceforth dominated by the industrial sector.

Table 8. Part of agriculture in the GDP of some industrial countries.

Countries	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1962	1967 (%)
1. United States	22	19	13	10	9	7	4	3
2. Sweden	19	19	15	11	10	7	5	5.9
3. United Kingdom	7	6	6	3	4	6	4	4
4. France	—	32	—	21	22	15	9	7.4
5. Japan	68.4	65.5	54.2	49.8	43.2	32.4	25.5*	19.7*

*1965, 1976.

Source: Rosier, 1968: 115; Malassis, 1973: 271; Ogura, 1979: 673.

Table 9. Evolution of agricultural production in Zaïre.

Products	1959	1966	1970	1974	1975 (1000 M.T.)
A. Agriculture for exportation					
Oil palm products	3,353.0	146.0	224.3	135.8	112.6
Coffee	56.6	36.1	65.0	77.7	58.9
Caoutchouc	40.6	30.4	31.0	26.6	24.2
Cotton (fibre)	52.8	7.4	8.6	1.6	1.0
Tea	3.5	6.1	7.3	5.9	4.7
Wood (timber, sawn wood)*	3.9	4.1	4.5	4.7	5.3
Cocoa	166.3	317.0	162.2	54.6	18.8
B. Agriculture for national industry					
Oil palm products	59.4	68.7	86.0	63.7	92.4
Rough timber*	121.0	104.0	297.4	264.0	215.3
Cotton (fibre)	10.4	7.4	8.6	14.9	15.3
Sawn wood*	153.0	94.0	116.2	105.3	61.3
C. Commercial food production					
Cassava	100.0	100.0	670.7	750.0	800.0
Banana	110.0	350.0	310.0	400.0	430.0
Maize	110.0	65.0	90.0	160.0	125.0
Rice	165.0	410.0	90.0	150.0	135.0
Meat	31.0	24.8	39.0	40.0	40.0
Fish	127.1	40.0	40.0	90.0	75.0

Source: Van der Steen, 1977: 28; *: 1,000 m³.

Can we explain the Zaïrian situation in the same way and consider agricultural recession a result of industrial development, as it is the case in Table 8? It is not surely the case because agricultural regression in Zaïre is not accompanied by any industrial development. On the contrary, the industrial sector is also in a crisis because its contribution to the GDP has notably decreased (2.5% in 1984 against 12.6% in 1966). In Zaïre's case, on the contrary, we notice the diminution of both produced commodities and GDP contribution. Table 9 illustrates well the regression of agricultural production from 1959 to 1975. In 1975, the total cotton production represented scarcely 26% of the production reached in 1959; oil palm products (exports) 3.4%; rice 82%, etc. Other products, except cassava and plantains, have not registered significant progression during these late years.

This is particularly obvious for main foodstuffs such as maize and meat, which have recorded a poor growth rate compared to the volume of global population which has increased more than twice between 1959 and 1975.

Recent data from the Zaïrian National Bank show that the degradation of agri-

Table 10. Indices of agricultural production (1970 = 100).

	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Agriculture for exportation (a)	102	79	86	63	60	56	68	66
Food production (b)	119	123	133	136	140	143	146	150

a: Average index elaborated by the Bank of Zaïre for the following products: oil palm products, coffee, wood, rubber, tea, cocoa, cotton.

b: Average index for the following products: cassava, plantains, maize, rice, fruits, vegetables, breeding, fishing.

Source: Banque du Zaïre, 1985: 90.

cultural production is quite significant from 1975 to 1982. Taking 1970 as the basic year (1970 = 100), indices of agricultural production appear as shown in Table 10.

Thus, agricultural regression in the GDP composition, far from signifying a development process, constitutes rather one of the obvious manifestations of the economic crisis which affects the country and results, among others, in the diminution of agricultural production.

Indeed, excessive extension of the service sector has no relationship with the historic process of economic development observed in industrialized countries. It is true that when the improvement of technical productivity occurs in the agricultural sector and industry and then the country advances to a massive consumption stage of goods and services, the tertiary sector should be developed in order to solve problems of commodities distribution and adaptation to consumers' tastes.

The excessive importance of the tertiary sector in Zaire is explained neither by improvement of agricultural and industrial productivity nor by the apparition of new requirements due to the elevation of the standard of living. It is rather a question of underdevelopment structural deviation which originates from rural exodus and produces a hypertrophic "informal sector" in urban centres.

Consequently, the decline mentioned above has nothing to do with economic development process but is rather a sign of underdevelopment.

2. Part of Agriculture in Economically Active Population

The second indicator which will allow us to appreciate the evolution of an agricultural sector in Zaire's economy concerns wage-earning labour and the importance of the rural population to the total population.

Recent statistical data concerning the labour force in Zaire are almost unavailable. Complete data are collected only for years before 1960 except some interesting information given by the Ministry of National Economy in 1973 which allow a comparative analysis with the last decade of the colonial period (Ministère de l'Economie Nationale, 1973). The same document has emphasized the fact that in current conditions it is impossible to achieve an exhaustive analysis of labour phenomena in Zaire because of the lack of necessary data.

Table 11. Distribution of wage-earning workers in principal economic branches.

Branches	1950	1956	1958	1973 (%)
1. Agriculture	24.8	25.1	28.4	28.7
2. Mining	11.9	8.8	7.9	14.6
3. Manufacturing industry	14.0	11.9	9.2	26.6
4. Commerce	6.4	6.8	6.2	4.9
5. Transport	6.5	7.7	7.0	16.8
6. Construction	8.8	10.4	9.5	4.6
7. Services	2.0	3.3	4.2	3.8
8. Others	25.6	26.8	27.6	—
Total	100	100	100	100
(Number of workers)	962,009	1,197,896	1,102,270	405,784

Source: Banque Centrale du Congo Belge et du Rwanda-Urundi, 1959: 79; Ministère de l'Economie Nationale, 1973: 338.

However, Table 11 gives some idea of the evolution of an agricultural sector in total wage-earning labour. This table shows that the agricultural contribution still remains important to the total labour force: 24.8% in 1950, 28.4% in 1958 and 28.7% in 1973. Here it concerns only wage-earning labour in the modern sector (plantations and capitalist agro-industrial firms).

Contrary to other economic indicators, agriculture's part has not decreased after the independence concerning wage-earning labour. But we can also notice that this tendency denotes only the inability of other sectors to create new jobs in sufficient numbers and also the stagnation of agricultural productivity in the modern sector.

The importance of agriculture to the global active population becomes more explicit when we compare the evolution of the agricultural population with the total population. Figure 1 enables us to follow the evolution of Zaire's population from 1930 to 1984.

Population involved (directly or indirectly) in agriculture remains preponderant in spite of geometrical growth of urban demography due to rural exodus.

Rural population was 95.8% of the total population in 1930, 80.9% in 1950 and 78.5% in 1970. But this importance is now decreasing from year to year: 63.4% in 1980 and 56.4% in 1984. This decrease corresponds to a steady growth of the urban population: 19.1% in 1950 and 43.6% in 1984. We can also notice that the increase of the rural population compared to that of the urban population from 1960 to 1970 was mainly due to the political insecurity of the first years of the independence.

Popelier (1977) has estimated that from 1970 to 1980 urban population growth

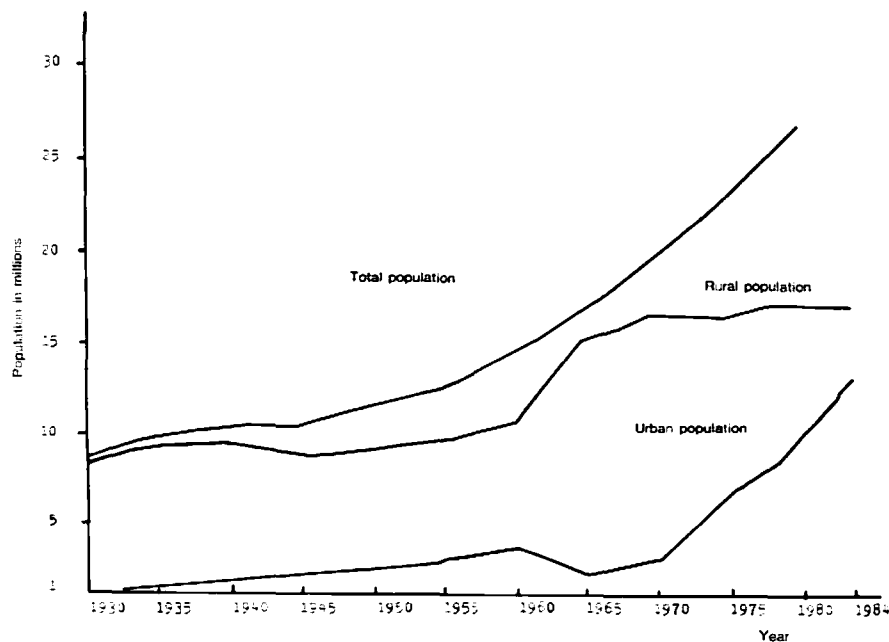


Fig. 1. Evolution of Zairian population (total, urban and rural) from 1930 to 1984 (Source: DADR, 1987: 59).

Table 12. Evolution of agriculture's part in the labour force of some industrial countries.

Countries	1900	1930	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985 (%)
1. United States	38	21	5.4	4.3	3.9	3.5	3.1
2. Sweden	43	30	11.1	8.3	6.9	5.7	4.7
3. United Kingdom	8	6	3.4	2.8	2.7	2.6	2.5
4. France	44	36	17.9	13.6	11.1	8.6	6.7
5. Italy	59	47	24.8	18.8	15.4	12.0	9.5
6. Japan	68.4	49.8	26.4	19.6	15.4	11.2	8.3

Source: Rosier, 1968: 115; Malassis, 1973: 271; FAO, 1986; Ogura, 1979: 673.

could expand 10 times more than rural population: Equivalent to 81.5% annual augmentation in urban centres against 8.5% in rural areas. Does this decrease of rural population (from 95.8% in 1930 to 56.4% in 1984) mean a manpower transfer from agriculture to the non-agricultural sector, as observed in the development process of today's industrial countries?

Indeed, referring to the economic process of these countries, we notice that development has always been accompanied by a diminution of the agricultural population as shown in Table 12. The percentage of agricultural labour has decreased gradually as the industrial and service sectors progress. This was made possible due to the improvement of agricultural labour productivity (7.0 units in 1910 against 60.00 units in 1960-64 in United States) which allows for important production with only very few workers (Bairoch, 1967).

This is not the Zaire's case. The decrease of agricultural population is not due to technical improvement. On the contrary, agricultural productivity has passed from 6.9 units in 1946-50 to 5.0 units in 1960-64 (Bairoch, 1967). Only rural exodus can explain present rural depopulation which results in proliferation of ghettos, unemployment and poverty in urban centres.

Lack of improved techniques coupled with rural depopulation has resulted in the regression of agricultural production already noticed in Table 7. The decrease of produced quantities automatically repercussions on export-earnings which have diminished accordingly.

3. Part of Agriculture in the Export-earnings

Developed countries have a diversified economy and their export-earnings from agriculture are generally negligible. This situation is possible because of the enlarged industrial sector which furnishes essential investment opportunities. Also these countries are exporters of manufacturing commodities, while agricultural exports represent only a negligible percentage of their external market (except for few countries such as Australia and New Zealand).

Table 13 and Fig. 2 show the composition of Zairian exports and then, the place occupied by agriculture compared to other sectors from 1950 to 1984. We can notice that in 1950 agriculture furnished about the same amount of foreign currency as the mining sector: 48.87% against 49.82% for the mining sector. This contribution has progressively decreased: 33.02% in 1956 and 41.76% in 1959.

Table 13. Evolution of structures of Zairian Exports.

	1950	1956	1959	1970	1975	1979	1980	1982	1983	1984
	(%)									
1. Mining exports	49.82	65.86	56.42	83.39	81.72	83.73	84.72	73.96	75.45	67.71
Copper	23.90	40.27	32.21	65.95	55.43	32.81	43.76	44.20	44.23	29.05
Cobalt	5.41	7.16	5.79	5.97	10.60	39.20	20.30	10.13	7.32	11.06
Diamond	3.71	4.95	6.95	5.09	7.00	6.72	4.25	4.56	8.19	9.79
2. Agricultural exports	48.87	33.02	41.76	15.95	15.65	14.46	11.86	9.90	10.20	13.66
Coffee	9.23	8.19	12.40	5.57	6.19	9.55	8.04	6.48	7.91	10.27
Caoutchouc	1.39	3.81	4.49	1.83	1.33	1.14	0.74	0.39	0.29	0.87
Oil palm products	15.88	8.67	12.39	4.60	4.68	0.59	1.03	0.46	0.44	0.54
3. Industrial exports	1.31	1.21	1.82	0.66	1.37	1.81	3.42	16.15	14.35	18.63
4. Others	—	—	—	—	1.26	—	—	—	—	—
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Banque Centrale du Congo Belge et du Rwanda-Urundi, 1959: 84, 85, 87; Banque du Zaïre, 1985: 217.

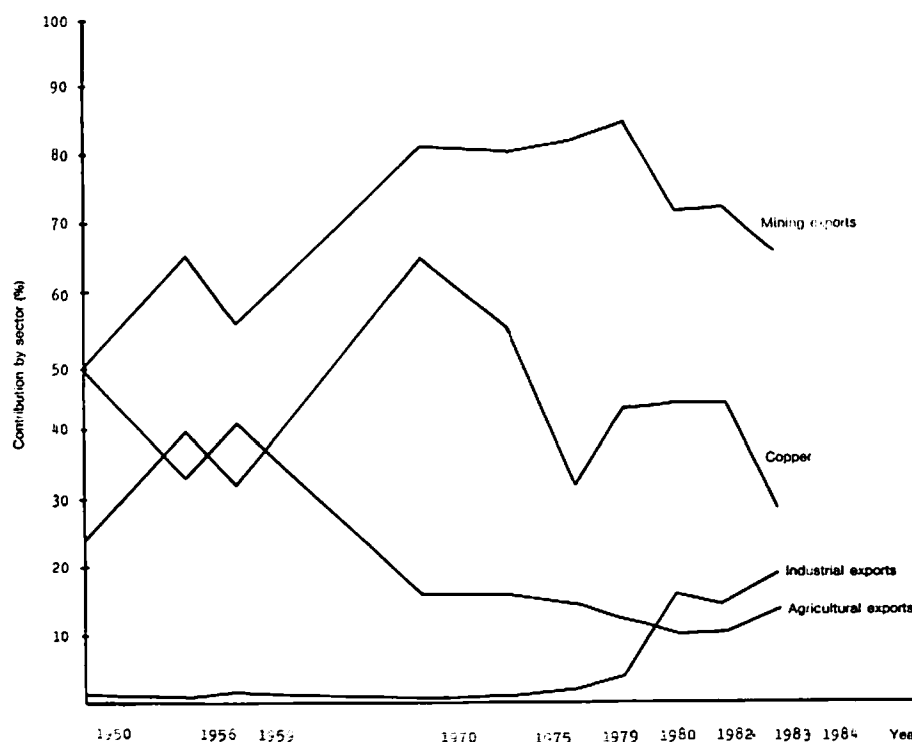


Fig. 2. Evolution of agriculture in the Zairian export-earnings (Source: Banque Centrale du Congo Belge et du Rwanda-Urundi, 1959: 84; Banque du Zaïre, 1985: 27).

Since 1960 there has been a total reversing tendency and agriculture's contribution fluctuates around 15%. Copper is now the principal source of Zairian foreign currency. The contribution of this sole commodity reached 65.95% of the total foreign currency in 1970 and 55.43% in 1975. The mining sector contributes almost 80% nowadays. The fact that export-earnings generated by the agricultural sector pro-

gressively vanish cannot be interpreted as a sign of economic dynamism or structural change as it was the case in industrialized countries when they accomplished their "Industrial Revolution". It is, on the contrary, a question of economic stagnation due to the contraction of agricultural production. This agricultural depression has resulted in a strict dependence of Zairian economy on one export commodity, copper. Thus, Zairian economy, deeply linked to copper only, is suffering also from the wide instability of its prices in the international market.

The analysis of three indicators above (sectoral distribution of economically active population, GDP composition and export returns) makes it clear that agricultural contribution has steadily decreased since the 1960s. This decline cannot be interpreted as a sign of economic and structural change as it was the case in developed countries because the agricultural crisis has provoked only a hypertrophic tertiary sector, while industry has not registered notable improvement.

Below I will attempt to analyze why agriculture, since the independence, has so far collapsed. At first, I discuss formal causes of the agricultural crisis as it is explained by Zairian official institutions.

FORMAL EXPLANATION OF AGRICULTURAL COLLAPSE IN ZAIRE

The vulnerability of Zairian economy has been masked for a long time by the relatively high price of copper in the international market. But, with the copper slump of the 1970s, agriculture appeared, clearly and rapidly, as a key sector in the national economy. The agricultural crisis which has hit the country for many years has been explained in different ways by the national ruling class and by specialists of Zaire's economy.

Below, I intend to summarize different obstacles and appreciate their real impact on the current situation of Zaire's agriculture. I endeavour to understand the meaning of government's rhetoric about the current situation and its efforts to overcome this crisis. Causes discussed in this section are generally accepted by the government's rhetoric and by most researchers interested in Zairian agriculture. My main aim in the following analysis is to give my opinion on the real impact of these different obstacles on the current agrarian crisis in Zaire.

1. Degradation of the Transportation Infrastructure

Among causes generally advanced to explain Zaire's agricultural crisis, the transportation problem always appears as a central component. About 30 years ago, Zaire had at its command a large and diversified transportation network. The national territory was covered by 140,000 km of roads which assured good communication among persons and commodities inside the country. This abundant road network was kept regularly in good repair and then facilitated internal commerce between different regions and urban centres, especially the evacuation of export cash crops (coffee, palm products, cotton, etc.).

Also, urban centres have been supplied with foodstuffs and raw materials with

reasonable delay. The Decennial Plan (1950–1959), defined and achieved under Belgian rule, stressed transportation infrastructure and collective equipments (medical centres, housing and water supply). Despite the fact that this road infrastructure was essentially conceived for the requirements of export commerce, it has played an important role as an economic incentive in rural areas.

Today, many rural regions have lost communication with urban centres. For instance, the current condition of the important road which connects Kisangani to North Kivu and Ituri illustrates well the degradation of Zairian networks. Prices of foodstuffs in the Kisangani urban market depend on the condition of this road: Meat, poultry, fish, maize, etc. can cost twice or three times as much as their normal prices in case of traffic interruption on this road.

Roads connecting rural areas are quasi-abandoned, except in regions where agribusiness depend on peasants' production for their supply. They try, then, to keep the existent network in good repair. In some cases, these capitalist firms are in charge of the popularization of new techniques (improved seeds and fertilizers). However, they also contribute to the exploitation of peasants' agriculture by low monopolistic agricultural prices and compulsory cultivation. This is the case of SOTEXCO (Société Textile et Cotonnière) for cotton production in the Region of "Haut-Zaire" and COMIGEM (Combinat Industriel de Gemena) for oil palm products and peanuts in the Region of "Equateur".

Some bridges destroyed during the confused period after 1960 have never been repaired. The public institution, "Office des Routes", created to assure the maintenance of road traffic, has recorded very poor achievement in rural areas and has concentrated its efforts only on 45.000 km of main roads. However, minor roads, which are vital for rural communications, have been committed to the local administration unequipped with appropriate techniques and materials.

Concerning the railway network: No effort has been made to extend the existent infrastructure, except timid improvements such as electrification on the line Lubumbashi-Ilebo and utilization of oil engines instead of steam engines. Railway infrastructure was conceived for export requirements during the colonial period. Its extension into rural areas in order to introvert the actual network has not retained the interest of the current ruling class. In 1960, Zaire's railway network had a length of 5.012 km; today it is 5.254 km or an augmentation of 242 km in 29 years.

The Zaire River and main affluents (e.g. Kasai, Kwango) have an important role as the transportation infrastructure between the countryside and urban centres. This is true only for riverside residents, especially between Kinshasa, Kisangani and Ilebo (Kasaï Occidental).

The general degradation of transportation infrastructure since 1960 is aggravated, as far as the agricultural sector is concerned, by the fact that agricultural regions are disfavoured compared to mining regions. For instance, about 50% of national railway traffic and infrastructure are concentrated in the mining region of Shaba. Most agricultural regions (Kivu, Haut-Zaire, Bandundu and Equateur), either for food production or export cash crops, are bad off concerning transportation infrastructure.

Transportation infrastructure is quite insufficient for the size of the country: Only

1,957 km of roads have been asphalted. But this poor record is accentuated in most agricultural regions compared to mining regions (Shaba and Bas-Zaïre especially). The degradation of Zaïre's transportation infrastructure constitutes a very serious obstacle to economic development, particularly to agricultural development. In some regions, the lack of good transportation network has confined rural areas to isolation. Peasants in these regions are never willing to produce more than their own requirements because they lack incentive for commercial surplus.

The government's analysis of the agricultural crisis always emphasized this problem. According to diverse official reports, the bad condition of the road network is incontestably the main constraint to any rural development effort. It prevents the peasants from receiving agricultural inputs at necessary time, while the marketing of farm products becomes very hazardous. This situation explains why peasants hesitate to produce more than their own requirements (Commissariat Général au Plan, 1979). Peasants, in this case, do not augment their production because they cannot sell the surplus. The transportation problem stresses, then, their marginal condition and prevents them from taking an active part in the national economy.

On the other hand, urban centres cannot extend their market to these isolated regions. Accordingly, production potentialities in either rural areas or in the urban industrial sector remain below normal average level because of lack of economic incentives. In current conditions, merchants who can reach remote regions are very few and practise monopolistic prices in these places. They try to maximize their returns as soon as possible to make up for very high maintenance expenditures. Even in this case, many rural regions cannot be reached because of transportation impossibilities.

This problem is worsened by the dispersion of rural populations and scattered villages throughout many regions, which prevent good communication among them and efficient supervision of rural development projects. The peasants' isolation allows few economic opportunities for their production. In this way, it can partially explain the current agricultural crisis.

2. The Inefficiency of Agricultural Research and the Educational System

The second reason generally admitted to explain the agricultural collapse concerns the inefficiency of agricultural research and educational system which has been explicitly recognized by the Zaïre's state. Below I intend to appreciate the real meaning of this factor in the context of Zaïrian agriculture.

It has been said that the weakness of Sub-Saharan Africa's agriculture compared to other Third World countries results from the inefficiency of agricultural research. For instance, agricultural development in China and India has been strongly supported by agricultural research which has allowed peasants to use improved seeds, fertilizers, and weed-killers and to exploit land previously inappropriate for agricultural activities (Conseil Mondial d'Alimentation, 1986).

Concerning Zaïre's case, agricultural research is actually facing critical situation. Many serious problems are the cause of this inefficiency. However, during the colonial

era, Zaïre possessed one of the most famous agricultural research centres in Africa: INEAC (Institut National d'Etudes Agronomiques au Congo). This Centre, which specialized in cash crops, had the benefit of sufficient material resources and technical manpower of high quality. The efficiency of this Centre and the extensive popularization of its scientific findings brought Zaïre among the biggest exporters of tropical products at that period.

Today, INEAC has been replaced by INERA (Institut National d'Etude et Recherche Agronomique) which has a very important role in the improvement of Zaïrian agriculture. However, INERA still has a very limited impact in rural areas because it still continues to concentrate its research programmes on export cash crops as was the case with INEAC, and also continues to ignore peasants' requirements mainly concerning food production. INERA, like many governmental research institutions, is characterized by notorious inefficiency concerning scientific production: There are no scientific publications except the annual reports reprinting the same unaccomplished projects.

Many factors are explicitly recognized as an explanation for this inefficiency: Lack of financial means, very low salaries which discourage qualified researchers, plethoric bureaucratic prejudice against scientific production. These features are common to other governmental research institutions such as CRSN (Centre de Recherche en Sciences Naturelles), IG (Institut Géographique) and CRSAT (Centre de Recherche en Sciences Appliquées et Technologies).

The inefficiency of agricultural research institutions is aggravated by the absence or insufficiency of qualified extension workers in rural areas. Indeed, agricultural research results will be useful provided that they are widely popularized and accepted by the users (peasants and large-scale farms).

Many technicians and researchers have given up on rural areas because of transportation problems, low salaries moreover irregularly paid, lack of appropriate material. These bad working conditions have limited their credibility among peasants, while most large-scale capitalist firms have their own research network and scientific facilities.

Besides, technicians in rural areas still continue to consider a peasant as an irrational, ignorant person and, accordingly, unable to formulate objectively his own requirements. Under these conditions, it is almost impossible for them to obtain the peasants' adherence by persuasion.

Then, they invariably have recourse to compulsory methods. This attitude results from the educational background of technicians and researchers in Zaïre. At first, secondary schools which are devoted to the formation of rural technicians represent less than 5% of the total public schools. Programmes followed by these schools stress general education in order to let their students attend different faculties in universities after their graduation from secondary schools. This fact constitutes a deviation from the original aim to train intermediate technicians immediately useful in rural areas.

Agricultural training in Zaïrian universities (IFA: Institut Facultaire Agronomique; ISEA: Institut Supérieur d'Etudes Agronomiques; ISDR: Institut Supérieur de Développement Rural) is still organized in a colonial optic which considers peasants

as "inferior people" who must "learn" everything from the "holder" of a university's degree. The educational system, as it is currently organized in Zaire, generally preaches the contempt of peasants' condition, degradation of farm-work and the importance of rural exodus among young and dynamic generations.

It is paradoxical to state that rural children never learn, during their school years, anything about environmental, economic and social problems of their region and initiatives to solve them. On the contrary, they have been given the idea that the rural areas from which they originate can assure them neither the prestige nor the revenue "rightly" expected by educated people.

3. Lack of Financial Means

The government rhetoric also emphasizes the lack of financial means to explain the poor performance of agriculture. Particularly when the external loans are solicited, agriculture is always shown as the priority sector which is mostly affected by the lack of investments. Here I intend to give my opinion on this topic.

The problem of financial resources devoted to agriculture can be better understood by an analysis of agricultural expenditures in the national budget and agricultural credit conceded by financial institutions. State's expenditures are grouped into two rubrics: Ordinary expenditures and investment budget. Table 14 shows that annual investment expenditures are far behind ordinary expenditures in Zaire's national budget. This means that the investment effort has been very weak in this country. But this lack of investment devoted to extend productive capacities is more manifest in the agricultural sector. Indeed, agriculture occupies a very insignificant place in the national budget concerning either ordinary expenditures or investment effort.

Until 1975, the annual ordinary budget has devoted less than 1% to agriculture. The structural analysis of 1979's ordinary budget, for instance, shows that the Foreign Office has consumed 5.8%, Army: 12.43%, Education: 45.45% and Agriculture: only 1.70%.

Concerning investment budget, the situation is almost the same: 2.35% in 1977, 0.72% in 1982 and 2.53% in 1984. Between 1978 and 1980 agriculture profited from a temporary increase: 15.48% in 1978 and 13.14% in 1980.

Table 14. Real weight of agricultural sector in Zaire's state budget (in thousands of Zaires).

	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1984
A. Ordinary budget							
Total (a)	847,160	1,161,577	2,391,740	3,850,410	5,964,042	8,453,926	29,328,709
Agriculture (b)	24,042	33,516	40,762	55,175	109,648	167,706	222,531
Relative part of agriculture (b/a × 100)	2.83 %	2.88 %	1.70 %	1.43 %	1.83 %	1.98 %	0.76 %
B. Investment budget							
Total (a)	110,322	119,680	129,314	246,367	539,711	1,061,073	851,430
Agriculture (b)	2,544	18,523	11,876	32,377	19,582	7,620	21,500
Relative part of agriculture (b/a × 100)	2.35 %	15.48 %	9.18 %	13.14 %	3.63 %	0.72 %	2.53 %

Source: Banque du Zaire, 1985: 154, 158.

Table 15. Relative weight of agricultural sector in the credit conceded by commercial banks and specialized institutions (in thousands of Zaïres).

	1970	1973	1975	1980	1983	1984
A. Commercial banks						
Total (a)	122,678	300,497	481,689	1,512,921	5,392,809	9,461,084
Agriculture (b)	15,939	37,618	60,526	194,708	502,347	946,057
Relative weight of agriculture (b/a × 100)	13.0%	12.5%	12.6%	13.0%	9.3%	10.0%
B. Specialized credit institutions						
Total (a)	2,002	9,965	24,380	65,806	504,007	2,114,167
Agriculture (b)	250	608	1,114	1,935	22,753	222,320
Relative weight of agriculture (b/a × 100)	12.5%	6.1%	4.5%	2.9%	4.5%	10.5%

Source: Département du Plan, 1978: 21, 28; Banque du Zaïre, 1985: 264, 270, 272.

The increase of agricultural output and productivity can happen only when the producers have sufficient agricultural inputs. But in Zaïre, financial resources devoted to agriculture have been so little that we cannot expect the improvement of agricultural production or productivity. Indeed, there is only stagnation, even regression of agricultural production as it is the case now.

This situation shows the wide gap between the importance given to agriculture by the Zairian government rhetoric and the real facts. Besides, financial institutions have not supported enough the agricultural sector.

Table 15 gives the evolution of agricultural credit conceded by commercial banks and specialized financial institutions. Zaïre's banking system is composed of three components: The national bank which achieves the governmental monetary policy, commercial banks which collect savings and consent short term credit, and specialized institutions whose main field concerns housing loans, industrial loans, agricultural loans and underprivileged savings.

Zaïre has more than 10 commercial banks (BCZ: Banque Commerciale Zaïroise; BK: Banque de Kinshasa; UZB: Union Zaïroise de Banques; BDP: Banque du Peuple, etc.). These banks carry out diverse activities, but their contribution to the agricultural sector has been modest: Agricultural credit has represented less than 15% of total credit given by these banks between 1970 and 1986. The main specialized financial institutions are SOFIDE (Société Financière de Développement), BCA (Banque de Crédit Agricole) and CADEZA (Caisse Générale d'Epargne du Zaïre). Their contribution to agriculture has also been weak: Average of less than 10%.

Moreover, this meagre agricultural credit is exclusively devoted to the modern sector (plantation and agri-business) which possesses requested repayment guarantees. Thus peasants' agriculture has been completely ignored by commercial banks and specialized financial institutions. Even the BCA created in 1982 to promote the agricultural sector deals exclusively with the modern sector, especially with traders who buy products from peasants and exploit them through very low agricultural prices. This institution, like other financial institutions, requests mortgage and repayment guarantees for its loans. Because peasants have nothing to mortgage, they are excluded from this system which is conceived for large-scale farms.

Sometimes, peasants can receive credit in kind (e.g. improved seeds, fertilizers)

from public institutions such as PNM (Programme National Maïs), PNR (Programme National Riz) and INERA. But the prices of these inputs are so high that peasants, after harvesting, have to give most of their produce as debt repayment. This happens because these costly inputs do not produce proportionally additional production in order to ease reimbursement and also because of excessive deductions (in kind or in cash) exerted by lender institutions. Sometimes extension workers must resort to physical constraints against insolvent peasants and are then discredited.

If risks involved in any innovation have to be taken entirely by peasants, they would not be willing to experiment with new techniques or to accept innovations from extension workers. Farmers in other countries are willing to adopt new techniques and they experiment with them enthusiastically, because in case of failure, insurance system, banking credit, cooperatives, etc. will make up for that risk. In many cases, failure for African peasants may mean starvation, even death, because they have no support from the government or private financial institutions.

In this case, it is easy to understand peasants' logic when they prefer to continue traditional cultivation, and then secure their life, rather than to experiment with new techniques even if they may earn more money. Their choice, in this case, is clear and rational: Security instead of probable profit maximization. Besides, the fact that most beneficiaries of agricultural credit are living in Kinshasa and other cities induces the belief that only a small part of this credit, originally insufficient, reaches really rural areas: Indeed, concession of credit in Zaire relies more on social rank and links with influential politicians than on real needs to improve farming activities. Then, large part of agricultural loans is utilized in urban cities in speculative activities which have nothing to do with their original destination.

4. Absence of an Adequate Agricultural Policy

Another obstacle to agricultural development which has been slightly recognized by the Zaire's state concerns the absence of an adequate policy in this sector. I conform this analysis to the definition which considers agricultural policy as a bundle of measures in favour of agriculture in order to reach objectives previously formulated for a period of time (3, 5; 10 years) (DADR, 1987).

African countries, especially Zaire, suffer from the absence of economic planning and then, most of their accomplishments in this field seem to be the result of isolated, improvised projects without links between them. This is the general situation of the agricultural sector which is not well integrated into the national economy. Dualistic structure which characterizes Zaire's agriculture is a consequence of this lack of an integrated policy.

Since 1968, agriculture has been qualified in government's rhetoric as "priority of priorities". Zairian government has defined some objectives and has undertaken diverse actions to achieve them. The government's agricultural objectives to cope with the chronic crisis which has characterized this sector for a long time can be summarized as follows:

- (1) National self-sufficiency in food production,

- (2) Regular supply of national industries with local agricultural raw materials,
- (3) Maximization of export returns from the agricultural sector.
- (4) Improvement of the peasants' welfare in rural areas.

Different governmental documents have emphasized these objectives from 1968 to now. In order to reach these objectives, the Zairian government has taken several measures which I summarize as follows:

- (1) About national food self-sufficiency:

- The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development should improve the formation of its technicians and popularizers.

- Some offices were created (e.g. Programme National Maïs, Programme National Riz, Programme National Manioc) to palliate the inefficiency of formal agricultural research led by INERA.

- In the same way, the Zairian government adopted the World Bank strategy of "integrated agricultural development" which attempts to introduce a "technological package" (i.e. fertilizers, improved seeds, equipments) among small-scale farmers.

- The Zairian government also relies upon Protestant and Catholic missionaries to introduce appropriate technology, animal-drawn cultivation and cooperatives in rural areas.

- (2) Concerning cash crops and large-scale farming, the Zairian government has decided:

- To increase financial facilities by creating the BCA (Banque de Crédit Agricole) and improvement of SOFIDE (Société Financière de Développement) interventions in this sector.

- To allow the repatriation of profit undertaken by foreign investors.

- To concede important fiscal exonerations for the benefit of agri-business.

- (3) For the peasants' welfare in rural areas, it was decided to liberalize agricultural prices in order to increase producers' purchasing power.

Above, I have just noted the government's objectives concerning the agricultural sector and its strategies to achieve them. It will be interesting now to confront concrete results of these objectives in order to appreciate the success or failure of Zairian agricultural policy.

Achievements of the Zairian economy in the agricultural sector these late years have been far below the expectations. About food self-sufficiency, concrete achievements show that this objective has not been reached: Zaire continues to rely upon food importations. In 1958 Zaire had almost reached food self-sufficiency (food importations represented only 1% of Zairian total food consumption). But after then the country imported more than 40% of its food consumption (1966: 42.9%; 1974: 40.2%). Recent data (Kestin, 1985) shows that Zaire imported 60% of its national food requirements in 1985. Then, Zaire still continues to rely upon massive importations of basic food products such as maize, rice, meat and fish. (Table 16).

Importations of maize have been more important than commercial production in 1978 and 1979. They represented 78% of the national production in 1980. The situation is almost the same for other products (meat, rice, fish). Food imports do not

Table 16. Importations and estimation of commercial production for foodstuffs.

	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
	(1000 M.T.)						
Commercial production							
Cassava	785.0	808.5	832.8	857.8	883.5	910.0	937.3
Tubercles	90.0	92.7	95.5	98.4	101.4	104.4	107.5
Banana	440.0	453.2	466.8	480.8	495.2	510.0	523.3
Maize	125.0	128.0	131.8	142.7	147.0	151.4	155.9
Rice	127.0	130.8	134.7	140.4	144.6	148.9	153.4
Beans	65.0	67.0	69.0	71.1	73.2	75.4	77.7
Fresh fish	75.0	77.3	79.6	81.2	83.6	86.1	87.8
Meat	41.0	42.2	43.5	44.4	45.7	47.1	48.5
Fruits & vegetables	110.0	113.0	116.4	119.9	123.5	127.2	131.0
Importations							
Maize	139.1	150.0	102.8	29.6	28.7	9.4	15.1
Rice	29.8	15.6	3.5	13.2	3.0	27.6	26.4
Potatoes	0.4	0.3	0.5	0.7	0.4	0.03	0.3
Fish	7.5	5.7	1.6	9.0	4.2	9.5	12.9
Meat	13.9	6.0	7.4	5.0	3.6	10.9	23.4
Wheat	94.9	146.4	163.5	157.4	145.2	95.2	45.0

Source: Banque du Zaïre, 1985: 91.

increase because of lack of foreign currency and poor per capita revenue. The gap between national requirements and food availability (production and importation) shows the actual situation of Zairian agriculture about self-sufficiency.

We can also notice that the commercial balance of agricultural commodities has often been negative in Zaïre: in 1974, for instance, Zaïre imported food for 92.7 million of Zaires, while the export returns from the agricultural sector were only 82.7 million or a deficit of 10 million of Zaires. In spite of these massive food importations, national requirements are not fulfilled. For instance, the large meat deficit illustrates the wide gap between food availability and national requirements (Table 17). The deficit is increasing year by year: 598,309 tons in 1971 and 666,603 tons in 1975, which shows that the daily availability of food remains largely below the population requirements. Recent data (Table 18) shows that Zaïre has become self-sufficient only for cassava among the three most consumed foodstuffs (cassava, maize and rice).

The situation is the worst for meat and fish (respectively 4.18 kg/year and 4 kg/year as an average consumption while FAO norms are 25 kg for meat and 21 kg for fish). Between 1971 and 1980, the annual growth rate was 2.60 for food production and importation against 2.87% for population increase.

Table 17. Estimation of meat requirements, availability, and deficit of proteins.

Year	Population of Zaïre	Requirements (M.T.)	Real consumption (M.T.)	Deficit (M.T.)
1971	22,244,243	608,931	10,622	-598,309
1972	22,860,352	625,802	11,943	-613,859
1973	23,507,915	643,529	11,980	-631,549
1974	24,165,770	661,538	12,489	-649,049
1975	24,842,051	680,051	13,448	-666,603

Source: Mulumba, 1977.

Table 18. Deficit and surplus of foodstuffs.

		Estimated production	Requirements	Situation (1000 M.T.)
1979	Cassava	12,430	11,264	+1,166
	Rice	221	360	-139
	Maize	537	743	-206
1980	Cassava	12,784	11,616	+1,168
	Rice	233	371	-138
	Maize	562	768	-206
1981	Cassava	13,172	11,986	+1,186
	Rice	245	382	-137
	Maize	639	794	-155

Source: DADR, 1987: 18.

Table 19. Cotton requirements for national textile industry per year.

Cotton-mills	Requirements (M.T.)	Relative part (%)
1. UTEXCO	10,000	47.0
2. SOTEXKI	3,500	16.5
3. FILTIZAF	3,300	15.5
4. SOLBENA	1,800	8.5
5. AMATO	1,440	6.8
6. ZAITEX	1,020	4.8
7. Others	180	0.8
Total	21,240	100.0

Source: Mokonda, 1980: 332.

The second government objective concerns the regular supply of national industries with agricultural raw materials. Concrete achievements prove also that results are far below expectations. The case of textile industries (Table 19) well illustrates this situation: While national industries need 21,240 T per year, peasants produced only 9,741 T in 1980 (Banque du Zaïre, 1984). Then, 11,499 T should be imported to fulfill this deficit. The situation is almost the same for other products such as oil palm and sugar-cane.

Concerning the maximization of export earnings from the agricultural sector, the real situation shows that the agricultural part still continues to decrease. While the average contribution of this sector was 40% before 1960, nowadays it fluctuates between 20.2% (1976) and 9% (1982). In governmental policy, the mining sector takes priority over agriculture and generates about 80% of total export returns. Then investments are almost exclusively oriented towards the mining industry.

The last objective concerns the improvement of the peasants' standard of living. The deep impoverishment of rural areas proves to be contrary to governmental objectives. The peasants' impoverishment is a direct consequence of the deterioration of their purchasing power. The large gap between prices paid to producers and prices of manufactured goods cannot allow peasants to improve their welfare as was intended to in official declarations. Further, I will analyze in detail how the commercial bourgeoisie has accumulated his wealth by exploiting peasants and has prevented them from investing and producing more than self-sufficiency.

5. Inadequacy of Public Institutions Involved in Agricultural Development

Official documents have always recognized the lack of coordination between multiple public institutions in charge of the agricultural sector as an important factor of agricultural regression in Zaïre. Indeed, institutions which define and control agricultural policy in Zaïre almost act independently of each other. Their dispersed interventions do not obey an integrated programme. These insulated projects, executed in extended order, have not produced expected effects. In many cases they negatively compete instead of benefiting from economies of scale.

For instance, national agricultural objectives have been defined sometimes by the Ministry of Agriculture (Programme Agricole Minimum 1980), by the Ministry of Planning (Programme de Relance Agricole 1978–1980), and sometimes by the head office of the President of Zaïre (Plan Mobutu). Important factors which condition agricultural development completely escape the supervision of the Ministry of Agriculture: The maintenance of the road network is committed to a public institution (Office des Routes) which depends on the Ministry of Construction and to local administrative entities (*collectivités locales*) controlled by the Home Office.

Besides, the minimum official prices of the agricultural products are fixed by the Ministry of National Economy. Once, the Ministry of Agriculture protested against this system, saying that "fixed prices which must be considered as minimum prices are however considered as maximum prices. The fixation of these prices does not rely on the analysis of different elements which determine the net cost" (DADR, 1982: 3).

We can also notice the contradiction between development objectives defined by different public institutions. For instance, one of the objectives pursued by the Ministry of Agriculture is the maximization of export-earnings from agriculture, while the Ministry of National Economy is pursuing the maximization of fiscal returns to cover the public financial deficit. This situation has resulted in the increase of taxes charged on agricultural exports (e.g. *taxe conjoncturelle temporaire*, *taxe statistique*).

This confusion also exists about the agricultural educational system supervised by the Ministry of Education without any coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture concerning the contents of programmes, real requirements of rural regions, research priorities, etc. Because the Ministry of Agriculture is the largest employer of agricultural technicians in rural regions, it is quite right that this institution should also indicate which kind of technicians are requested according to real requirements and experiences of rural areas.

Besides, the instability of the structure of INERA, the only agricultural research centre in Zaïre, which sometimes depends on the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Scientific Research and sometimes on the Office of Zaïre's President, illustrates also the confusion reigning among different institutions involved in agricultural development projects.

Thus, concerning either the conception of agricultural policy, or about specific problems such as agricultural research, education, prices and transportation infrastructure, different public institutions involved in this sector do not have an in-

tegrated strategy and sometimes pursue objectives diametrically opposed. There is not a central organ to coordinate different actions into one integrated whole in the agricultural sector. The Ministry of Agriculture has already raised this issue: Any coordination among different ministries which intervene in agricultural policy has not been assured and it results in the mismanagement of resources, equipments and manpower (DADR, 1982). The analysis above has clearly shown which of the Zaire's agricultural problems are explicitly accepted by Zairian official institutions.

The Ministry of Agriculture (DADR, 1982) has suggested solutions to the agricultural crisis in the following terms: Concerning peasants' agriculture, remunerative prices should be proposed to incite the production of commercial surplus and to break off the self-sufficient economy. This requires an appropriate commercial system and convenient transportation networks. Peasants must have opportunities for access to agricultural inputs (e.g. fertilizers, weed-killing tools, insect-killing) and purchasing manufactured commodities. This strategy should also stress possibilities of providing new techniques easily in rural areas in order to increase agricultural productivity. Because these conditions have never been completely fulfilled during the last 20 years, peasants' productivity is steadily decreasing and has compromised urban food supply. The government is, then, constrained to import costly food to cover national requirements, particularly to supply big cities.

Concerning the modern sector, the Ministry of Agriculture has estimated that ranches and large-scale farms have suffered important losses from the nationalization of foreigners' assets in 1973. Its current difficult situation is due to mainly the lack of foreign currency to import raw materials and equipments. An official explanation of the agricultural crisis and a proposed strategy to deal with this crisis seem to be clearly expressed. However, we must ask ourselves why agriculture still continues to be neglected in spite of political declarations which have recognized the strategic importance of this sector and what are the causes of its collapse. In other words, are the official explanations enough to understand the actual crisis?

Of course, problems such as transportation infrastructure, agricultural research, an inappropriate educational system and lack of financial means are real and cannot be minimized. However, the current agricultural crisis is not a result of these isolated causes, but of their cumulative and mutual effects. The main explanation of agricultural collapse lies on political ground due to the nature of the present Zairian state which is used as an instrument of wealth accumulation and domination by politicians, themselves businessmen.

NATIONAL BOURGEOISIE AND AGRICULTURAL CRISIS IN ZAIRE

The causes of the agricultural crisis, agricultural degeneration and perpetuation mechanisms are better understood only if we consider motives which have led the Zairian state, since the independence, to deliberately neglect the agricultural sector, especially to act against peasants' interests. Contemporary orientation of economic policy which has plunged agriculture into unprecedented depression can be understood only if we integrate, in our analysis, the situation of a minority ruling class

which has been in power since the independence. The personal interests of the political and commercial bourgeoisie, its reactions in the face of an agricultural crisis and its responsibilities as a ruling class must be the main component of the analysis. If we really want to understand relationships between peasants and Zairian state and why government's rhetoric for almost 30 years has not produced any positive results for peasants.

Indeed, we can notice that official argument about the agricultural crisis in Zaire, up to now, has carefully eliminated any reference to the responsibility of the national bourgeoisie. The reason is that the ruling class in power which finances and controls the research network cannot allow any allusion to its role as the dominant social group. Except few scientists such as Kankwenda (1983), Peemans (1980) and Longandjo (1985) analysis of Zairian crisis, conducted under the supervision of the ruling bourgeoisie, has limited itself to the apparent causes and has wittingly been unable to explain why agriculture is facing a structural crisis since the independence.

During the colonial era, Zairian agriculture was assigned double objectives: To supply manpower to the mining sector, transportation infrastructure and to the industry, and at the same time to feed at cheap prices urban populations. These objectives could be reached efficiently by means of the strong physical constraints exerted by colonial administration which also prevented population migrations from rural regions to cities.

Since 1960, as agriculture has failed to supply sufficient food to urban centres, they had to rely mostly on importations, especially for fish, meat and rice, while a rural exodus is almost impossible to stop. The current weakness of the administrative apparatus has resulted in a high level of despotism and corruption, which has eventually contributed to the disorganization of the agricultural sector and unprecedented rate of rural exodus.

To solve the crisis, or rather to "manage" it as once said by Kankwenda (1983), the ruling class has decided to resort to palliative solutions which exclude peasants. For instance, the model of "development agreements" (conventions de développement) which requests industries to produce themselves agricultural raw materials they need (especially breweries and tobacco producers) or to provide food for their manpower (the case of Gécamines, the biggest mining firm in Zaire) in order to avoid expensive maize importations. This formula has permitted some capitalist firms to produce food as shown in Table 20.

Table 20. Production and provisions of maize.

Firms	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984 (M.T.)
1. Renault-Zaire Kinshasa	—	—	300	1,500	2,000	2,000
2. Gécamines CEPSE Likasi	10,500	14,200	20,000	30,000	35,000	45,000
Kamina Kasese	5,400	2,600	5,000	6,000	7,000	8,000
3. SODIMIZA Musoshi	1,500	2,000	2,500	3,000	3,000	3,000
Total	17,400	18,800	27,800	40,500	47,000	58,000

Source: DADR, 1982: 36.

It means that the Zaïrian state prefers capitalist firms to peasant agriculture to solve the agricultural crisis. Then, the available financial means are concentrated on the modern sector. Concretely, the agricultural plan elaborated by the Ministry of Agriculture (1984) relied exclusively on capitalist mining societies and large-scale farms. The agricultural projects financed by external resources from foreign countries (France, Belgium, U.S.A., Japan, West Germany) and international organizations (World Bank, FAO and PNUD) have concerned oil palm products (Equateur), cotton and sugar-cane (Bas-Zaïre). The only result of these kinds of projects was to enlarge the external debt, while the agricultural output has not sensitively increased. Peasants who have not benefited from these external financial resources, mostly support the hard conditions of debt repayment and economic recession.

Concerning these projects financed by foreign countries, van der Steen (1977) has noticed that the large-scale projects using tractors and sophisticated material which request the intervention of high qualified foreign technicians, almost retain the attention of Zaïrian policy makers. But the real cost of these projects is artificially decreased by state subsidies or foreign aid. When these subsidies and foreign aid end, the project cannot continue by itself and it collapses.

This policy confirms the assertion of Boutrais (1982) about the agricultural policy in Africa, of which he described as "an agriculture without peasants". It also illustrates the exclusion of peasants from the process of agricultural development for the benefit of industrial and commercial capitalism. Indeed, the commercial bourgeoisie has actually a vested interest in the commerce of peasants' production and acquires scandalous profits, to the prejudice of the producers, by buying at very low prices and selling at very high prices in the urban markets. We can now understand the meaning of the liberalization of agricultural prices in Zaïre. It is just a way to reduce the agriculture to its current role: To enrich a parasitical urban bourgeoisie.

Generally, peasants sell their product to and receive loans from the same middleman. They are then exploited in these two ways by means of low agricultural prices and prohibitive loan interests. Commercial relationships between peasants and traders in rural areas have been characterized by agricultural low prices coupled with very high prices of manufactured goods.

Figure 3 and Table 21 show the gap between official minimum prices which are not respected by monopolistic traders, the very low prices really paid to peasants, and the fabulous profit margin taken by the commercial bourgeoisie. Figure 3 shows sufficiently how scandalous the peasants' exploitation is for the benefit of the commercial bourgeoisie. Official agricultural prices, already low compared to prices of manufactured commodities paid by peasants, are not even respected by the monopolistic traders who also receive excessive returns from urban consumers.

The fabulous profit margin taken by the commercial bourgeoisie cannot be explained only by the degradation of the transportation infrastructure. We must consider the fact that prices are fixed by the Ministry of National Economy and by the association of Zaïrian businessmen, ANEZA (Association Nationale des Entreprises du Zaïre). The peasants' interests are not represented in this process. The peasants' situation is worsened by "sky-rocket" inflation rates: The average index of retail prices has passed from 100 in 1970 to 18,519 in 1984 (Gamela et al., 1986).

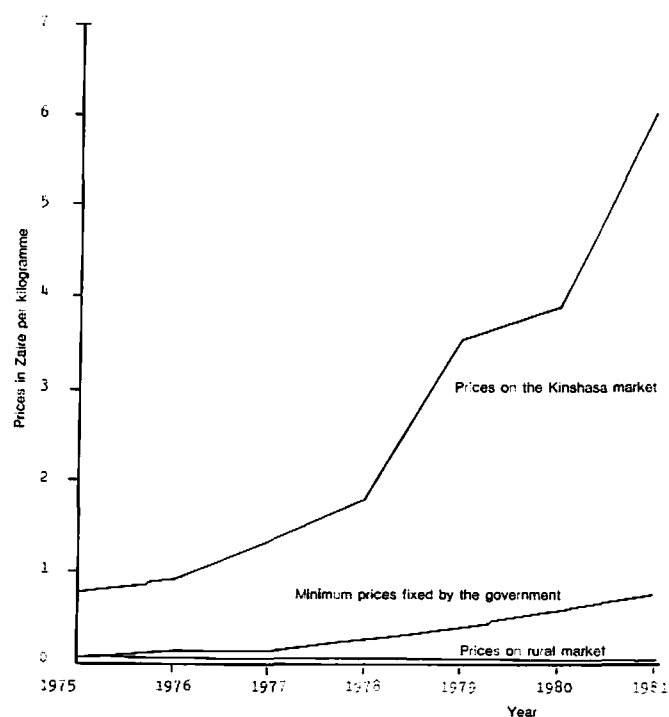


Fig. 3. Evolution of the maize prices from 1975 to 1981 (Source: Gamela et al., 1987: 57).

Table 21. Prices of Zairian main foodstuffs (cassava, maize and rice) (1975 = 100).

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
	(Z/kg)							
Cassava								
State minimum prices	0.020	500	500	1100	1750	2500	3250	—
Prices on rural market	0.020	265	160	245	190	185	180	—
Prices on Kinshasa market	0.290	165	320	544	979	1079	1293	2344
Maize								
State minimum prices	0.070	171	171	314	500	714	928	—
Prices on rural market	0.070	90	56	70	54	53	51	—
Prices on Kinshasa market	0.770	119	169	235	462	505	796	1146
Rice								
State minimum prices	0.080	150	150	200	625	875	962	—
Prices on rural market	0.080	79	49	44	69	65	53	—
Prices on Kinshasa market	0.540	40	163	337	818	1039	2030	2839

Source: Gamela et al., 1987: 42.

These “sky-high” prices in the market have nothing to do with the evolution of per capita revenue. Then, the standard of living has dramatically gone down both in urban centres and in rural areas as shown in Figure 4.

While prices of the agricultural products in rural areas have been kept at a very low level, urban consumers are requested to pay colossal amounts of money for the same

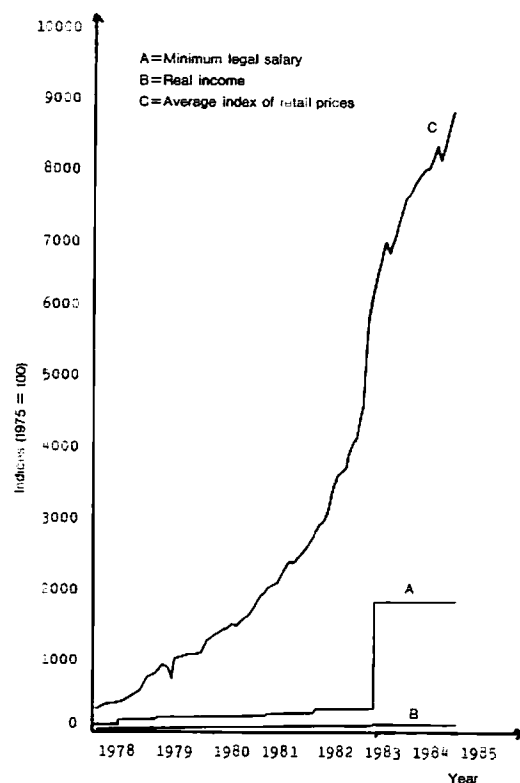


Fig. 4. Evolution of minimum legal salary, real income and average index of retail prices (1970 = 100) (Source: Banque du Zaïre, 1985: 65).

products. Verhaegen (1973) has estimated that the prices of agricultural products such as cassava, maize, peanuts and oil palm paid by the consumer were 3–10 times higher than prices received by producers. Especially prices of vegetables from North Kivu and sold in the Kinshasa market were 30–40 times higher than peasants' prices.

As we can notice, peasants and urban consumers are victims of the prices practised by the commercial bourgeoisie who is the only beneficiary. Why has not the Zairian government attempted to change this situation? Indeed, we must remember that the political bourgeoisie which has ruled the country since 1960 does not have a self-sufficient economic base to support its domination and to reinforce its position as the intermediary between the local population and international capitalism. This class depends, for its wealth accumulation, on public resources. As the Zairian government, since 1960, has received more than 80% of its resources from the mining sector, we understand why the ruling class strives to control this sector.

The control of state resources provides the Zairian political class with economic benefit in three ways: High salaries, corruption and embezzlement. For instance, Peemans (1980) has noticed that in 1980, more than 60% of Zaïre's ordinary budget was embezzled and, in 1982, the Zaïre's president disclosed also that 50% of the annual budget (4 billion of Zaires out of 8 billion) was embezzled. Besides, Verhaegen

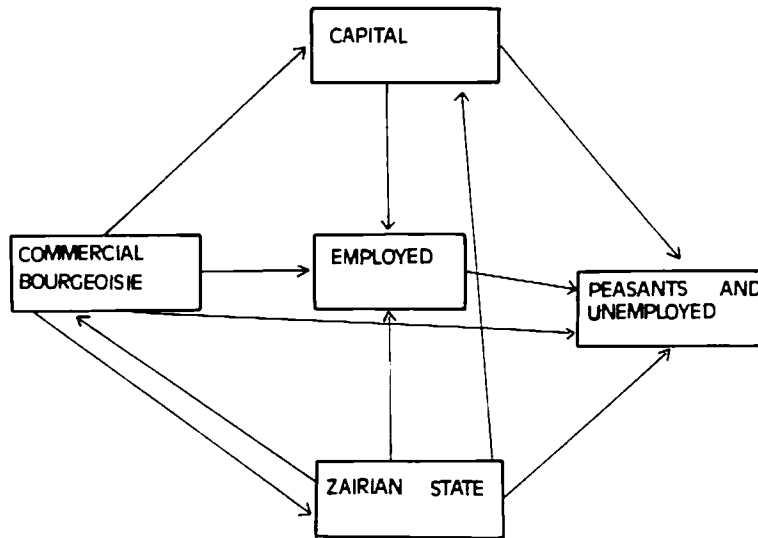


Fig. 5. Social group's relations in Zairian macro-society (Source: Longandjo, 1985: 1).

(1978) has analyzed how the political bourgeoisie, through corruption, accumulates its wealth in negotiations with foreign countries: This class negotiates all of its services to either producers, investors, suppliers or even consumers. Especially the political class finds wealth opportunities when foreign investments, cooperation projects or equipment supplies are concerned. We can now understand why very expensive, inappropriate and needless projects such as the giant dam of Inga, especially the electric line Inga-Shaba, and the Maluku steel mill (*Sidérurgie de Maluku*) have been accepted by the ruling class.

This analysis sheds light upon the nationalization measures (Zairianization: 1973, Radicalization: 1974) which now appear clearly as an attempt to constitute an economic base for the political bourgeoisie. This class neither had a regular source of wealth accumulation nor could find it in the financial sector nor in the industry where the foreign interests were mostly strong. Commerce and agriculture were the only sectors considered easy to confiscate. The device "economy is in the service of Zairian people" had sense only for the political and commercial bourgeoisie who monopolized the nationalized assets.

We can also refer to the analysis of Longandjo (1985) about relations of social groups in Zaire in order to make clear the responsibilities of the commercial and political bourgeoisie which utilizes the Zairian state as an instrument of wealth accumulation in the current agricultural crisis (Fig. 5). The commercial bourgeoisie has control over the means of production (capital) resources and over the employed mass. This bourgeoisie can also mobilize peasants and unemployed masses for its own profit.

But this system works successfully on the condition that the State intervenes to secure the bourgeoisie's interests. Then the main vocation of the state is to mobilize

materials and human resources for the benefit of the national bourgeoisie and foreign investors. The state mobilizes the peasants' surplus by fixing very low agricultural prices which are not even respected by traders (cf. Table 21 and Fig. 3) in order to insure the commercial bourgeoisie's wealth. Agricultural price levels constitute a concrete proof of the State's role as an instrument devoted to mobilize local resources, especially from agriculture, for the benefit of the commercial bourgeoisie.

We can understand, then, why peasants, sometimes, are reluctant to increase their production and why agriculture faces a serious crisis nowadays. Under these conditions, peasants' interests do not prevail among policy makers. On the contrary, they are exploited by means of low agricultural prices, compulsory cultivation, etc. for the benefit of the commercial bourgeoisie. No action has been taken to improve their situation.

The problem with this kind of "compradore bourgeoisie" is that it is a consumer bourgeoisie (opposed to the producer bourgeoisie in capitalist developed countries). This social class has accumulated wealth through corruption, high salaries and embezzlement of public funds. The capital, then accumulated by these means, is mostly kept abroad in foreign currency, invested in speculative activities in the country or purely consumed in ostentatious expenditures.

As this compradore bourgeoisie has been managing the country since the independence, it is natural that agriculture should have been neglected for the benefit of the mining sector which insures the State's revenue and, then, its own wealth. We can understand why agriculture is "milked" without any concern for its regeneration. The current agricultural crisis cannot be rightly explained without the compradore bourgeoisie's context.

Peasants' reactions, in order to face this shameless exploitation, depend on the possibilities of respective rural regions for access to urban markets or to shift from agriculture to non-agricultural activities:

- Peasants, when the gap between agricultural prices and other commodities is largely unfavourable to them, prefer to produce strictly for their own consumption because profit from commercial surplus is not proportional to the additional effort. This is particularly the case in remote areas which have few exchanges with urban centres. As the transportation infrastructure is quasi-inexistent, even traders seldom communicate with these areas (for instance, the case of Masisi in North Kivu).
- Peasants who can sell their products in good conditions and obtain valuable revenue are capable to adjust their prices to the evolution of the general index. This is the case in Regions such as Bas-Zaire and Bandundu which have a good transportation infrastructure and are well connected to Kinshasa. In these areas peasants are interested in producing more than self-sufficient level and can bargain their commodities. However, this can happen only for foodstuffs but not for cash crops.
- In mining regions where diamond and gold can be exploited, agriculture is abandoned for the profit of this traffic. Though agricultural prices steadily increase, young generations do not accept returning to farm-work and, in many cases, school attendance is considered a waste of time. This is the case in Regions such as Kasai (diamond) and Shabunda, Walikala in Kivu (gold).

Besides, in the face of the declining capacity of the state for development, if not its negative attitude concerning peasants' agriculture, ordinary people have developed "survival strategies" (Nzongola et al., 1986). In rural areas, peasants' reactions consist of a passive resistance or of complete isolation from state institutions and activities. We can also notice the proliferation of religious groups such as *Kitawala* or *Monama* which constitute, in fact, movements of political resistance. For instance, *Kitawala*, the millenarian movement existed during the colonial period and was aimed at removing the colonizers through magic means is still popular in Zaire.

CONCLUSION

The agricultural crisis in Zaire is not an accidental situation but is the result of the policy defined and executed by the ruling bourgeoisie for the personal interests of this class. Hence, formal causes of this agricultural crisis, generally accepted by the government, only partially explain the actual situation of the agricultural sector and must be considered as secondary, subordinate causes or aggravating factors. The main explanation of this crisis, without minimizing perverse effects of problems such as transportation infrastructure, agricultural research and educational system, consists in the economic policy followed by the compradore bourgeoisie.

This situation, far from characterizing only Zairian agriculture, is rather common in many Third World countries, particularly in Africa. We can refer here to the South American "Latifundia" and feudal land tenure system in some Asian countries. However, the solution to this agricultural crisis cannot be found without peasants who represent the main component of agricultural development. Food production still relies on peasants' agriculture and then, agricultural policy must consider, above all, the peasants' interests concerning production systems, inputs' availability and prices.

Consequently, current solutions proposed to solve the crisis (Development Agreements, Rural Integrated Development Scheme) constitute only a palliative which can, for a short period, mitigate problems of urban food supply and agricultural raw material. However, they are not appropriate to solve the whole agricultural crisis.

I agree with Kankwenda (1983) when he stipulates that the current policy is not a solution but rather a way to manage the crisis. Perspectives of Zairian agricultural development still remain negative, unless the state should be dominated by other class coalition which gives privileges to the peasants' component.

Concerning international cooperation, Popelier (1977) has suggested, in a populist optic, that intensive capitalistic projects should be rapidly abandoned so that the profit of small-scale peasants who are the only ones to retain the agricultural solution may be promoted.

In the same way, I think that agricultural cooperatives can be rightly considered as an instrument of rural development, because they can free peasants from the exploitation of the commercial bourgeoisie by providing credit, informing them about official prices below which they cannot accept in order to sell their commodities and by taking charge of commercial process of farm produce. Then, by maximizing the

peasants' profit, cooperatives can encourage them to produce more than self-sufficient economy and elevate their purchasing and bargaining power. In this sense, cooperatives can constitute also a pressure group to protect peasants' interest, especially concerning agricultural prices and access to public financial resources. Cooperatives, considered from a populist optic, can contribute to an agricultural solution by introducing appropriate technology in rural regions and by providing adequate education for their members.

But this scheme can rightly work only if the state is dominated by a pro-rural, pro-peasants' coalition. It goes without saying that the success of rural development policy can be assured only by a strong mobilization of the mass of peasants freed from exploitation and given opportunities to participate actively in the preparation, implementation and supervision of national economic policy. Once more, this can be achieved only through peasants' organizations such as cooperative institutions.

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